

The Random Jottings of Donald Jay from Nelson in Pendle/

After my dad's untimely demise in 1962, I found myself a lonely lad, grappling with the weight of grief and the absence of a paternal figure in my life. But amidst the sorrow, I discovered solace in the simplest of pleasures: the company of friends and the warm embrace of shared moments.

One particular sanctuary awaited me every Sunday afternoon. If I timed it just right, I could make my way to David and Susan and Peter Bray's grandma's house on Merton Street in Nelson. The Bray siblings were my closest companions, and their grandma's abode became a haven for us all. In that humble dwelling, I found respite from my own loneliness and a taste of culinary delight that still lingers in my memory.

David, Susan, and Peter Bray were siblings bound by a shared history and an unbreakable bond. We would spend countless hours exploring the nooks and crannies of our small town, embarking on grand adventures fueled by youthful imagination. But Sundays held a special place in our hearts, for it was on this day that we indulged in the simple pleasure of Grandma Bray's chip butties.

As the clock struck noon, I would eagerly make my way to Merton Street, my footsteps echoing with anticipation. The Bray household was a cozy haven, filled with the comforting aroma of home-cooked meals and the faint echo of laughter that seemed to dance within its walls. And at the heart of it all was Grandma Bray, a woman whose warmth radiated from her every smile. Grandma Bray was a figure of unwavering kindness and generosity. Her wrinkled hands worked magic in the kitchen, turning humble ingredients into culinary masterpieces. The chip butties she created were legendary in Pendle, each bite a delightful combination of crispy chips, buttered bread, and a hint of secret seasoning that elevated the dish to unparalleled heights.

As we gathered around the worn wooden table, our laughter filled the room, chasing away the shadows of our troubled times. The three of us would regale Grandma Bray with tales of our adventures, our voices intertwining in a symphony of youthful exuberance. Her eyes sparkled with genuine interest as she listened, her love for us palpable in every word and gesture.

With a twinkle in her eye, Grandma Bray would place before us the much-anticipated chip butties, arranged with care on mismatched plates. We would devour them with gusto, savoring each bite as if it were a treasure. In those moments, the world seemed to fade away, and all that mattered was the simple joy of friendship, good food, and the love we found within those four walls.

Years have passed since those cherished Sundays in Nelson, and life has taken us on divergent paths. The Bray siblings and I have each carved out our own destinies, our memories intertwining with the ebb and flow of time. But the bond we forged, nurtured by Grandma Bray's love, remains unbreakable.

Today, as I reminisce about those carefree days, I find solace in the memories we created and the love that filled our hearts. I can still taste the chip butties, still hear the echoes of laughter, and still feel the warmth of Grandma Bray's embrace. And though my dad may have left this world too soon, I am forever grateful for the love and kindness that surrounded me, even in the darkest of times.

The chip butties may have been the highlight of those Sundays, but it was the love and togetherness we shared that made them truly special. And as I carry those memories with me into the present, I am reminded of the power of simple pleasures and the profound impact they can have on a young, lonely lad searching for a place to belong.

By Donald Jay.